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Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 05968 221440Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------001563 221445Z /50
O 221410Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7967

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5968

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, ILO, ELAB, TS
SUBJ: TUNISIAN DEMARCHE ON POSSIBLE US WITHDRAWAL FROM ILO

1. I WAS CALLED TO FOREIGN MINISTRY AUGUST 22 BY DIRECTOR OF EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN AFFAIRS MEJDOUB ON UNSPECIFIED MATTER. MEJDOUB OPENED MEETING BY SAYING BELGIUM AMBASSADOR HAD JUST CALLED AT FOREIGN MINISTRY ON BEHALF OF ALL AMBASSADORS OF EC-9 IN TUNIS TO INFORM GOT THAT EC-9 HAD MADE FORMAL DEMARCHE TO USG ASKING THAT US NOT WITHDRAW FROM ILO AND TO ASK THAT TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT EC-9 POSITION. MEJDOUB SAID THAT GOT HAD CONSIDERED MATTER AND DECIDED THAT TUNISIA COULD SUPPORT EC-9 POSITION "VERY STRONGLY". GOT HAD HOPED THAT NEW US ADMINISTRATION WOULD REVOKE INTENTION TO WITHDRAW LETTER. US WITHDRAWAL WOULD DO IRREPARABLE DAMAGE NOT ONLY TO ILO BUT TO WHOLE UN SYSTEM. AS FRIEND OF US, TUNISIA FORMALLY REQUESTED THAT WE NOT WITHDRAW OUR "MORAL WEIGHT" FROM ILO. IN ADDITION TO DAMAGE DONE TO ILO, TUNISIAN BELIEVED US WOULD BE DOING ITSELF A DISSERVICE BY, INTER ALIA, CLOSING USEFUL FORUM FOR PURSUING OUR HUMAN RIGHTS GOALS.

2. IN RESPONSE I SAID THAT I WOULD OF COURSE CONVEY HIS VIEWS TO MY GOVERNMENT. AS HE WAS WELL AWARE, US DOES NOT WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM ILO BUT MUST MAKE A JUDGMENT ON WHETHER PROGRESS CAN BE MADE TOWARD CREATING ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH THERE WOULD BE
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SOME BASIS FOR HOPING THAT TREND TOWARD POLITICIZATION OF ILO CAN BE REVERSED. AS RESULT OF RECENT COM MEETING WITH SECRETARY VANCE IN AMMAN, I WAS ACUTELY AWARE OF IMPORTANCE US MEMBERSHIP ISSUE. WE RECOGNIZE THAT MANY OF OUR FRIENDS WANT US TO REMAIN IN THE ORGANIZATION, AND WE HOPED OUR FRIENDS WOULD BE WORKING TO CREATE THE RIGHT KIND OF ATMOSPHERE IN THE ILO. IN PARTI-CULAR, WE WOULD HOPE THAT TUNISIA, AS A VERY GOOD FRIEND IN

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ARAB WORLD, WOULD BE OF ASSISTANCE.

3. MEJDOUB RESPONDED WITH STANDARD TUNISIAN LINE THAT GOT HAD DONE EVERYTHWNG THAT IT POSSIBLY COULD TO PROMOTE MODERATE POLICIES WITHIN GROUP OF 77, BUT ON ANY ISSUE TOUCHING ON "PALESTINIAN QUESTION", TUNISIA COULD NOT BREAK RANKS WITH ALL OTHER ARAB STATES. IN PARTICULAR, WE SHOULD BE AWARE THAT SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER ENNACEUR HAD DONE ALL HE COULD BEHIND THE SCENES AT GENEVA TO BE OF HELP (MEJDOUB WELL AWARE THAT OUR DELEGATION IN GENEVA DID NOT SHARE THIS VIEW, AND WE UNDERSTAND FROM DUTCH CHARGE THAT CTIIUM AMBASSADOR WAS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO TELL TUNISIANFOREIGN MINISTRY THAT EC-9 AMBASSADORS THOUGHT ENNACEUR HAD PLAYED UNHELPFUL ROLE IN GENEVA).

4. ACTION REQUESTED: SINCE JUNE ILO MEETING WE HAVE NOT ASKED TUNISIA TO DO ANYTHING SPECIFICALLY. I BELIEVE TUNISIANS ARE QUITE SINCERE IN SAYING THEY WOULD LIKE TO BE HELPFUL, ALTHOUGH THEY CONTINUE TO INSIST THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO BREAK RANKS WITH ALL OTHER ARAB STATES IN REGARD TO ANY ISSUE INVOLVING ISRAEL. LATEST GUIDANCE FOLLOWING GENEVA MEETING, CONTAINED STATE 169505, NOT SPECIFIC ENOUGH IN CIRCUMSTANCES. IF DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE MORE SPECIFIC VIEWS TRANSMITTED TO GOT, PLEASE ADVISE.
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